

Meeting Notes Jan 14,2004 Libby Geographic Area

Agenda: Review last meeting
 Discussion of draft timber suitability maps
 Work Group reports (ATV, trails & YVFC)
 Desired Condition statements
 Next meeting date is Febr 9th 6:30 PM (Ponderosa Room)

Attendance: (D.Bond & M.Edwards, FS), Auer, Betloch, King, Eisenberg, Chandler, Jackson, Hanson, Smart, Leimbach, Howells, Parker, Clark, Munson, O'Neil, Snyder, Ivins, P.Boring (Western News) & Johnson.

Access/Recreation Notes:

The trails/access group presented a DFC statement for ***access***: “Access will be provided for a wide range of recreational opportunities, motorized and non-motorized, considering developed and undeveloped areas while protecting and managing the resources”.

Other comments on access included: emphasizing monitoring and enforcement, and creating a system that the KNF can support and fund. Also- maintain current miles of open roads and access (“no net loss of existing roads”). Also- Need predictability of what access would be available (with no net loss of road miles). Also- are there funds to maintain roads? Also- need accountability for closures, why are they being closed and do we (FS) have data to back it up?

“Open roads for short term periods for huckleberry, firewood, etc., gathering...
“disperse use on a seasonal basis...
“no more obliteration of roads...
“Be more creative with managing access (partnerships?)...
“Maintain existing horse trails and maintain trailheads, so that trailers can be turned...
“Install turn-around areas at gates...
“Minimize conflicts...
“Commercial users (under partnership) allowed to open/maintain existing trails...
“Look at trends for changes or increases in users...
“Insure travel plan map matched the signing on-the-ground...
“If snowmobile access is allowed, make sure it is accessible...

Wilderness & Roadless Notes:

“Existing situation is recommended in wilderness...
“Is Treasure Mt ski area a consideration...? (300 to 400 acres)
** (need updated proposed wilderness, IRA maps for next meeting!) **
“IRAs remain the same as currently mapped...
“Keep proposed wilderness (1987) area as it now exists...
“ No motorized use in IRAs... (via email, Cronenwett)

Other (email) comments:

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am writing to express my concerns about matters regarding the forest plan revision for the Yaak Valley area.

1) Recreation and Access:

I oppose the use of off-road vehicles including ATVs, 4x4s and motorbikes

machines in and near all Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and un-inventoried roadless areas (PCAs) as defined in the Broberg study. These lands are the last refugia for wildlife and native forest ecosystems and are invaluable areas for hunting, fishing and primitive recreation on the Kootenai national forest. In addition, these places protect native plant diversity, resist weed invasion and are priceless reservoirs of clean, pure water.

I do not support ATV-related use in areas that will result in greater user conflict. Areas which could be highly contentious are big game winter range, cross country ski trails, bike trails, human habitation/subdivisions zones, high vehicle traffic routes, old growth stands and of course, roadless lands.

Any roads, whether closed or currently open which are proposed as part of an "ATV Loop Trail System" should be closely examined for impacts on wildlife, the potential for weed invasion, effects on other user groups, road safety and public approval. In addition, an analysis of budget constraints for road maintenance, law enforcement, weed mitigation and other concerns related to the creation of such a trail system should be implemented.

2) Roadless Areas/Proposed Wilderness/Proposed Conservation Areas

I support Wilderness designation for all of the Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) on the Kootenai National Forest. They have high biodiversity, wildlife and primitive recreation values which are fragile and irreplaceable. I also support conservation measures for the 129,000 acres of smaller, un-inventoried roadless lands in the Yaak. All roadless lands should be included in a inventory to validate boundaries and examine ecological conditions. These lands should be managed for connectivity of wildlife populations.

3) Vegetation

Noxious weed invasion is the big issue here. We need more intensive management of invasive species, inventories to determine where invasion is occurring, better management activities on the land that do not encourage weeds and experimentation with a variety of treatments. This may be the most devastating threat to the Kootenai in the not too distant future....please request more funding and manpower while you are at it.

4) Timber Production

Before the Forest Service attempts to "Identify [more] areas for timber production" as stated in the AMS, they must study the cumulative effects of past and recent management on the forest as a whole. It seems wholly inappropriate to suggest that fragmented, relic forests are a viable source of timber in the traditional sense. Clearly there are areas where small diameter trees could be removed for fire prevention (as in the Wildland-Urban Interface) and in drier forest-types as a tool to help move fire back into the system. However, the era of heavily mechanized, large-scale operations must come to a close.

The agency should develop science-based, enforceable standards for forestry practices. Templates, which take into account diameter class, canopy, understory vegetation, riparian areas, wildlife corridors and a host of other concerns, should be developed to guide harvest activities. Technology requirements should be developed for some areas, such as using only smaller machinery, helicopter or horses to haul logs. All old growth and late successional forests must be protected from commercial timber harvest. New roads and so-called "temporary roads" should not be constructed. Post-fire "salvage" logging is ecologically indefensible the way it is currently practiced. Naturally occurring disturbance such as fire, disease, insect outbreaks and windthrow should not be viewed as opportunities to design large timber sales. Particularly after fire, ground-disturbing activities encourage noxious weed invasion and reduces the remaining structure of the forest.

Lincoln County, Montana has the highest level of unemployment in the state, at 17.5%. (Missoulain, May12, 2003) The county is a poster child for the ruinous affects wrought by a boom-and-bust timber economy. Those that stood to gain most from such an economy, the large corporations, are mostly gone now. Left behind are unemployed or underemployed forestry workers who could put their skills to use on restoration projects throughout the Kootenai and IPNF. There are opportunities for Certified Sustainable Lumber cooperatives and finished wood products niche markets, both of which could feasibly operate over the long term using smaller diameter timber. Such an economy would be less susceptible to the vagaries of the global marketplace, unlike the current situation. The Forest Service should be encouraging and enabling such sustainable enterprises in the region.

5) Fire Risk

The so-called Wildland-Urban Interface is an area that may need some thinning treatments to protect homes and other structures from wildland fires. Still, the Forest Service may abuse this concept to increase logging opportunities. Each thinning unit in the WUI must be examined on a site specific basis and be ecologically and socially acceptable. Also, the natural role of fire in the ecosystem should be studied and management activities kept within the Historic Range of Variability.

6) Wildlife

Grizzly bears and lynx are the big issues. Both creatures need large areas of secure habitat to survive. Human caused fatality is the biggest reason for grizzly bear decline in the Northern Rockies. New

research concludes that the recovery zone for the Cabinet-Yaak population is inadequate and must be increased. The practice of moving bear "core" areas around the landscape every ten years is detrimental to the survival of the species...core areas should be the best bear habitat and be permanent. Authorities should be severe with bear poachers.

Again, connectivity and secure habitat are the themes for wildlife. Road obliteration could help this effort in many places.

7) Watershed and Aquatics

The agency should be encouraged to expand its stream restoration program. More federal funds are needed for this work. The FS should rely on appropriated monies instead of timber "restoration" funds, which causes more impact in one area while restoring another.

Thank you again for your interest and support.

Other DFC (draft) proposals: (ref. Leimbach)

Libby Geographic Area

ACCESS AND RECREATION

Forest-wide Goal 2b: Sustainable Uses, Values, Products and Services – Improve the capability of the Forests to provide desired sustainable levels of uses, values, products and services.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for your GA:

- Dispersed Recreation Sites
- Developed Recreation Facilities and Dispersed Sites
- Special Forest Products (huckleberries, firewood, mushrooms, etc.)

Desired Condition Statement	Adequate access it provided for a range of recreation opportunities that provide for a quality of life including scenery firewood gathering, huckleberry picking, hiking, horseback riding, snowmobile use and ATV use.
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Identify Priority Areas or Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Entire NE slope of Cabinet Mtns. 2) Head of Pipe Cr. And Pipe cr. Summit. 3) Bear Creek road terminus in east side of Cabinets.
Describe why this is a priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The east slope of the Cabinets is one of the most highly used portions of the KNF. 2) The head of Pipe Creek (especially East Fork) is a highly popular snowmobile area. 3) Bear Creek road is the only road that elderly people can get a close up view of the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness.



Forest-wide Goal 4: Access – Ensure access to National Forest System lands through the maintenance and improvement of roads and trails, while managing within the capability of ecosystems.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Road Access - year-round restricted, seasonally open and year-round restricted
- Road Maintenance
- Roads and Trails – winter recreation
- Roads and Trails – summer motorized recreation
- Roads and Trails – summer non-motorized recreation
- Trailhead facilities

Desired Condition Statement	The current level of road/trail access is provided. (Don't close any more roads or trails)
Identify Priority Areas	Snowshoe road, Bear Creek Road, Flagstaff Mtn Road.
Describe why this is a priority	

VEGETATION

Forest-wide Goal 1c: Forest Health – Increase the amount of forests restored to or maintained in a healthy condition with reduced risk and damage from fires, insects and diseases, and invasive species.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Weed Risk
- Insect and Disease
- Vegetation Condition and Trend

Desired Condition Statement	A healthy forest that includes reduced fire risk and noxious weeds (especially knapweed)
Identify Priority Areas	1) Fire risk areas around Libby. 2) Low to mid elevation especially in the warm/dry areas of the GA.
Describe why this is a priority	1) Because of risk to private property and human life. 2) Because warmer/drier areas are intermingled with private land.

Forest-wide Goal 1a: Watershed Conditions – Restore and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity and soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and intended beneficial uses.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Soil Productivity and Integrity

Desired Condition Statement	None needed for this GA
Identify Priority Areas	
Describe why this is a priority	

FIRE RISK

Forest-wide Goal 1c: Forest Health – Increase the amount of forests restored to or maintained in a healthy condition with reduced risk and damage from fires, insects and diseases, and invasive species.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Fire Risk outside Wildland Urban Interface
- Fire Risk within Wildland Urban Interface

Desired Condition Statement	Reduce the fire risk in the area around Libby (wildland /urban interface). This is duplication with the vegetation DFC.
Identify Priority Areas	Developed areas surrounding the town of Libby.
Describe why this is a priority	This is a wildland/urban interface.

TIMBER PRODUCTION

Forest-wide Goal 2b: Sustainable Uses, Values, Products and Services – Improve the capability of the Forests to provide desired sustainable levels of uses, values, products and services.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

▪ Timber sold

Desired Condition Statement	Continue the current level of suitable timber acres except: 1) West Fork Quartz Creek (Steep area with hemlock) 2) 2) Faces of ridges along East Cabinets (steep and highly visible)
Identify Priority Areas	All existing suitable acres except where noted above.
Describe why this is a priority	Because the maximum amount of acreage needs to be retained to provide a high level sustainable flow of timber products.

WILDLIFE

Forest-wide Goal 1b: Condition for Species – Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species and to achieve objectives for Management Indicator Species (MIS) and focal species.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Terrestrial Plants and Wildlife
 - Old Growth Habitat
 - Down wood and cavity nesting habitat
 - Wildlife habitat in support of State wildlife agencies goals.
 - Threatened and Endangered Species
 - Sensitive Plants and Animals

Desired Condition Statement	Maintain the existing situation regarding all of the above items.
Identify Priority Areas	Existing OG, GB, Lynx Wolf.
Describe why this is a priority	

WATERSHEDS AND AQUATIC SPECIES

Forest-wide Goal 1a: Watershed Conditions – Restore and protect watershed conditions to provide the water quality and quantity and soil productivity necessary to support ecological functions and intended beneficial uses.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Watersheds Functioning-at-Risk Condition
- Watersheds Not Properly Functioning
- 303d listed streams
- Riparian areas Not Properly Functioning

Desired Condition Statement	High quality drinking water is provided in Flower Creek, which is the water supply for Libby.
Identify Priority Areas	Flower Creek
Describe why this is a priority	Watershed for town of Libby.

Forest-wide Goal 1b: Condition for Species – Provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species and to achieve objectives for Management Indicator Species (MIS) and focal species.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Fisheries – structure, composition and function of aquatic systems
- Habitat connectivity
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Amphibians and native non-salmonid fishes habitat

Desired Condition Statement	Maintain existing situation regarding all of the above.
Identify Priority Areas	Existing Bull Trout streams.
Describe why this is a priority	Required by law, regulation or policy, new forest-wide management direction will be adequate for this GA.

IRAS AND PROPOSED WILDERNESS AREAS

Forest-wide Goal 2a: Wild Lands (Wilderness, Wilderness Study, Recommended Wilderness, and Wild Rivers) – Maintain and improve the capability of wild lands to provide for primitive recreation and a wide array of ecological values.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Reduce impacts of use on sites or areas.
- Establish natural fire regimes in all of these areas.
- Reduce acres of areas infested with noxious weeds.

Desired Condition Statement	Continue the existing situation for recommended Wilderness in the Cabinet Addition except for about 300 acres within the potential Treasure Ski area. Continue existing situation for the Kootenai for Wild and Scenic candidate.
Identify Priority Areas	Cabinet Addition recommended Wilderness. Kootenai River candidate for Wild and Scenic.
Describe why this is a priority	Cabinet Addition is currently in conflict with the Treasure Mtn, Ski area proposal. Kootenai River is a current candidate.

OTHER FOREST-WIDE GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Forest-wide Goal 2b: Sustainable Uses, Values, Products and Services – Improve the capability of the Forests to provide desired sustainable levels of uses, values, products and services.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Grazing
- Personal Use Minerals (personal use, common rock material and recreational use)
- Mineral Withdrawals
- Abandoned Mines
- Historic Properties – identify, evaluate and nominate
- Historic Properties – protect and preserve
- Scenery Management
- Research Natural Areas

Desired Condition Statement	<p>The viewshed around Libby provides for a high quality of life for residents. Snowshoe Creek is recovered and provides a functioning fishery. Phase out grazing due to conflicts (noxious weeds) Maintain existing Research Natural Areas. Take care of Snowshoe Mine.</p>
Identify Priority Areas	<p>Entire viewshed of Libby. Headwaters of Snowshoe Creek.</p>
Describe why this is a priority	<p>People value the viewshed very highly and it is one of the reasons people live here even though the economy is difficult. Snowshoe Creek is polluted from mine wastes.</p>

Forest-wide Goal 3: Community Development and Public Involvement
– Provide assistance to rural communities and private landowners.
Promote better management of National Forest System lands by providing opportunities for public involvement.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Community Assistance
- Information, Interpretation and Education
- Partnerships, Volunteers and Community Groups

Desired Condition Statement	
Identify Priority Areas	
Describe why this is a priority	

Forest-wide Goal 5a: Recognize and maintain culturally significant species and the habitat necessary to support healthy, sustainable, and harvestable populations. Recognize and protect traditional cultural properties.

Potential Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Consultation Agreement

Desired Condition Statement	Kootenai Falls is protected.
Identify Priority Areas	Kootenai Falls

Describe why this is a priority	Important site for Kootenai-Salish
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DESCRIPTIVE DESIRED CONDITIONS FOR LIBBY GA

Potential Descriptive Desired Condition Topics for Libby GA:

- Treatment of roadless areas and recommended wilderness
- Special Interest Areas

Desired Condition Statement	A healthy forest that also provides economic benefits for people, as well as a quality of life which includes scenery, outdoor recreation opportunities and special designations such as wilderness, recommended wilderness, wild and scenic rivers etc.
Identify Priority Areas	Cabinet Wilderness recommended additions. Kootenai Wild and Scenic River and Treasure Mtn. Ski Area.
Describe why this is a priority	These areas have the opportunities to provide for a quality of life as well as economic opportunities.